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We Don't Notice Respect Until It's Gone

When it comes to the topic “respect”, we often say it’s an essential part of our community that keeps society together and fosters trust. Sadly, it’s easier to find examples of extreme counterexamples of respect rather than extreme examples of it. Is it because we don’t realize its importance until it’s gone, or is it just common? Maybe it’s because it’s disrespect that showed us what respect would truly look like. Although we can’t be certain why, remembering both respect and disrespect helps us improve society; it’s actually counterexamples, rather than direct examples of respect, that have shaped our society and brought changes for the good. For instance, movements against unfair traditions show how disrespect can spark societal change.

The importance of respect might have started to be recognized relatively recently, because it’s really easy to find opposites of respect from older culture and history. Although there was still respect, it was more towards tradition, focusing on maintaining social stability, and older forms of respect often dismissed younger people. This form of respect had side effects such as sexism due to gender roles, and racism since older traditions were more exclusive. Out of all of this, the one that still lives on to this day that’s easy to notice is expected respect towards elders. Older respect demanded unquestioning obedience to elders. While it is important to respect our elders and authority figures, telling young ones to do so without question will teach them authority can do whatever they want without consequences or give the wrong idea of how people should be treated. When parents speak to their children disrespectfully, it can completely shatter a child’s sense of how people should treat one another. This difference shows up more

dramatically in South Korea, where modernization happened in a very short amount of time. A common pattern is parents dismissing their children's opinions as "talking back," which enhances distrust and repeats cycles of disrespect within families. These family patterns ripple outward, affecting schools and local communities. This shows why it's important for parents to respect their kids as human beings and not beings they can control or obey them indefinitely. From my own experience, I've noticed how respect — or the lack of it — shapes how families interact today. Compared to the past, it's better — not good, just better — but it still needs polishing.

Modern respect, compared to older forms of respect, is getting better. We strive toward greater equality across race and gender, all thanks to respecting people as people. Efforts are underway to correct unfair power dynamics in society. More and more people are trying to stop generational cycles, though it doesn't always go smoothly; while some parents spoil their kids, healthy parenting can still be found. So the decrease of traditional respect can be good in some aspects, but sometimes, it can look like younger people are more disrespectful. I've actually experienced this a few times in group projects before, where my peers don't respect each other as much and it's stressful to work with them. I've heard peers treating others disrespectfully as if it's normal. Older generations may joke that it's because "they weren't spanked enough," but that's untrue. Those behaviors probably got picked up from adults around them or the media that they consume. It's the parents' responsibility to keep them away from misleading media and teach them proper behavior. If those kids grow up to be disrespectful adults, the cycle simply repeats. The responsibility is on us to keep respect alive in society and serve as an example to future generations. By practicing respect in our daily lives and showing positive examples in

media and community spaces, we can influence the next generation and strengthen communities from local neighborhoods to the world stage.

Per the growth of social media and the consistent growth pattern of respect, it's uncertain whether respect would grow to be better or worse — some parts of the media normalize disrespect, while others know what's wrong with it. That is exactly the reason why we should show more examples of respecting others. That way, even if kids online get stuck in their own bubbles seeing only what they want to see, they'll eventually realize the difference between the real world and the online world. If we keep trying to show good examples of respect and stigmatize disrespect, we'll eventually arrive at a society where respect is persistent in families, schools, and neighborhoods. Perhaps the education system may improve too. We would elect more accountable leaders. Ideally, we would live in a society with reduced conflict. Even if our practice of respect might not have immediate effect on the world, it will ripple out towards the world slowly. With patience we will achieve it.

In my daily life, I notice respect and disrespect very quickly because I constantly deal with both of them all the time. When I experience disrespect, it's mostly from the generational pattern of expecting kids to obey their parents no matter what. It took me some time until I realized that the old concept of “talking back” is just parents being angry with the way their kids question them, even when it's literally just a question. It's probably not their fault; however, it's most likely just a generational pattern that was normalized when they were growing up. I could avoid this getting normalized in my life because I quickly noticed the difference between how my parents treat me and how friends and teachers at school treat me. Usually they'd generally try to listen instead of interrupting, express their ideas instead of correcting, etc. I'm motivated to not repeat the same cycle as parents in the future, because I'm probably the first generation in my

family to have noticed this pattern and I want a healthier relationship with my future family.

Another thing, I will never talk ill of other people, as that's also a form of disrespect. Sometimes, I see people making fun of people behind their backs, and when I see it happening in front of me, I feel uncomfortable picturing this person doing the same thing about me. Because of that, I will try not to talk about people behind their backs no matter what, unless they're trying to do something really bad to a person and I'm talking to that person. Respect is not inherited automatically — it is learned, practiced, and passed forward. The choices we make now determine the tone of the generations that follow.